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Supporting Sustainable Agriculture
in the Southern Appalachians through
Educational Programs and Outreach



...e-news

CRAFT at A Way of Life Farm



Sara Jane and Jamie Davis, with A Way of Life Farm in Rutherford County, were our gracious hosts for our seventh CRAFT tour this year on Sunday September 9th. It was a beautiful day and we had a great turn out for the tour which focused on **“Alternative Approaches to Soil Fertility.”** Big thanks go out to the Davis family for sharing their farm and the clever combination of techniques they employ to build soil fertility with us.

A Way of Life Farm began in 2009, as the manifestation of Jamie and Sara Jane’s desire to care for the land and grow good food. They’ve put a lot of thought, hard work, and a healthy dose of trial and error into developing a set of farming systems that suits their lifestyle, beliefs, and landscape. The Davis’ and their two

interns grow a variety of vegetables intensively on 1 ½ acres; tend a hill-side blueberry patch with several fruit trees; and rotate pigs through scrubby woodland paddocks. To market their vegetables they travel to the Charlotte Regional Farmers Market, manage an Asheville-based two season CSA, and are a member farm in Plateful Multi-Farm CSA.

The tour began as we settled down under a shade tree and Jamie gave us the rundown of their alternative methods for soil fertility. Jamie explained that soil fertility is determined by the balance between the chemical make-up, physical structure, and biological nature of the soil. But, none of these aspects exist in isolation. Since, all three are connected if you change one component you change the others. To achieve true soil fertility we must approach each aspect understanding its influence on the whole and chose farming methods that support one another for building, managing, and balancing soil.

[Read about A Way of Life Farm's practical approaches for managing the chemical, physical, and biological properties of their soil at the OGS Blog!](#)

CRAFT is a year-round farmer training collaborative that offers farmers and their interns networking and learning opportunities. Membership is rolling, so join anytime! Visit our website [for more information](#) or to [join](#). Or contact Cameron Farlow, OGS Farmer Programs Coordinator at

Organic Growers School CRAFT



Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training

828.338.9465 or [via email](#)

Farmer's Corner

Ask Tom: Average Temperature



Tom –

This season I seemed to have a new set of bugs and disease that were only minor problems in the past. Did you notice that too?

-- Perplexed in Grapevine

Dear Perplexed -

I noticed that lettuce bacterial spot was particularly bad this year. It was an irritation in the past but it became a major problem this year. My theory is that the warm temperatures in June favored some pathogens and insects over plant resistance and natural controls. Once they became established the problem lasted most of the season.

My theory is based in part on an experience several years ago with grey mold (botrytis) in my tomato greenhouse. Botrytis infects tomato blossoms so fruit never form. It can invade the calyx so fruit drop before they are ripe. It can turn fruit with minor imperfections into culls. In consulting with other growers, they recommended keeping our greenhouse temperature above 55 degrees. I reset the greenhouse thermostat from 50 to 55, and the botrytis....

[Click here to continue reading on the OGS Blog. You can also leave your comments for Tom and interact with other readers.](#)

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Got a Question for Tom?**

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Gardener's Corner

Ask Ruth: Harvesting Sweet Potatoes



Dear Ruth,

This is the first year I have grown sweet potatoes. How will I know when they are ready to harvest?

Thanks,
Jennifer
Canton, NC

Dear Jennifer,

Yum! You're looking forward to a harvest you will enjoy for months. **Here are some factors to consider prior to your sweet potato harvest:**

- Determine when you planted your sweet potatoes. They take about 95 days to mature - so count back to when you planted them and decide when you can safely dig them up. If you planted near June 1st, your crop is ready to harvest.
- The longer you leave sweet potatoes in the ground, the larger they will get...and sometimes they get gigantic. Do you want football-sized sweet potatoes?
- Harvest when the weather is still hot, because sweet potatoes cure faster in hot weather.
- Harvest before frost. Even though sweet potatoes can take a light frost, some of your tubers could be damaged.
- Harvest when the soil is dry for best curing.
- Harvest when you have ample time to complete the job. Sweet potatoes can develop sunscald if left in the sun for several hours.
- Slowly-yellowing leaves on your sweet potato plants indicate that your potatoes are ready for harvest.



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- Want to partner with OGS year-round and gain year-round exposure for your business? [Learn more about the Organic Growers School Growth Partner Program.](#)

Contact Beth Trigg at 828-776-1973 for more information!

[Read the rest of Ruth's Tips for a Successful Sweet Potato Harvest, and add your comments, too. Click here for the full article.](#)

Gardeners:
Got a Question for Ruth?
[Email it to us](#), leave it on [the blog](#), or [Follow us on Facebook](#) and ask us there.

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OGS thanks the following businesses for their continued support of our work! For more information about becoming an OGS Growth Partner, Contact Beth Trigg at 828.776.1973 or beth@organicgrowersschool.org

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News Update

OGS' work now and in the future



You hear a lot about our Conference, CRAFT, and Apprentice Link services. What else is OGS up to? The Board and Staff of OGS has spent a great deal of time in 2012 working on a strategic plan that will determine our work for the next 3-5 years! We interviewed close to 50 community members including farmers, gardeners, organic living enthusiasts, educators, and more to gain feedback about our work, as well as community needs now and in the future. We'll be rounding out our plan in the final months of this year, and can't wait to get

going. For now, here are some of our ideas:

- Working to identify and assess gardeners and gardening in the WNC region so we can better assist growers
- Launching initiatives that will help anyone get started with gardening, and working with partners to conduct education and outreach in new communities throughout the region
- Providing expanded, year-round assistance for commercial farmers in addition to current offerings, including round table discussions on production and business management, on-farm workshops, and possibly even a farmer-only conference in the winter months!
- Exploring taking CRAFT groups and other farmer training events to new geographic locations throughout WNC
- Developing interactive educational media content on our website and online
- Providing information about becoming a farmer, via articles, workshops, and easy, approachable information about accessing regional resources

These are just a very few of the many ideas we have traded, and we look forward to keeping you updated as we prioritize our plans and start to move on our growth plan. For now, you can get involved by [becoming a volunteer](#), or making an instant tax-deductible [donation](#) to the Organic Growers School. We appreciate your interest and your continued support!

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